

ARTFORUM

Amy Myers

MALIN GALLERY - ASPEN

Jeff Gibson 2020



Amy Myers, *A Dream Perimeter; Dimensional Inter-Repetition*, 2019, oil on canvas, 72 ×

“Daughter Universes,” the title of Amy Myers’s first solo show with Malin Gallery (formerly Burning in Water), aptly connotes a kind of cosmic femininity. Google-dig a little deeper and one learns that the term also refers to a hypothetical offshoot of

quantum mechanics, which postulates that all material and energetic encounters spawn separate spheres of possibility. At this point, it might help to know that Myers's father was an aviator and physicist who apparently suffused his daughter's universe (sorry) with a lofty perspective and an enduring fascination for invisible, elemental forces and their diagrammatic representation. That perhaps accounts for the cosmic part. As for the feminine aspect, the obvious, and not unrelated, influence at work here is botanical taxonomy, commonly manifesting in the artist's output as dahliaesque, bio-geometric patterning and, more to the point, swooping, orchidlike vulval forms. In each of the five large canvases and half-dozen smaller pieces on display, the artist's fondness for scientific illustration was as palpable as her facility for pictorial synthesis was impressive.

All but one of the large paintings featured an off-center cynosure of intricately enmeshed, schematically organized lines and diaphanous masses, imperfectly mirrored, like exquisitely assisted Rorschach tests, held in weightless suspension as if by some celestial centripetal force. The effect was transfixing, even mesmerizing. Fiercely pretty—radiant ornamentation, gossamer lacework, and Art Nouveau—y arabesques float within rippling, aquatic-hued fields—these works are not shy in their solicitations. Veering breezily into trippy decor, they're delightful to behold, exuding a transcendent calm via the luxuriant marriage of loosely mathematic constellations and gestural elegance. Known for more than a decade for her fluid and precise drawings, Myers here presented her first serious foray into oil paint. That it took her so long to come to this medium is surprising, since its pliability and luminous translucence would seem ideally suited to the rendering of her coalescent cartographies in ethereal negative space. Drawing still provides the underlying architecture, but the use of paint lends dimension and sensuality. Symmetry—and its subtle negation—is clearly pivotal to Myers's work, as it is for that of many pattern-based painters. The artful interruption of the dominant, bilateral duplication of line and liquescent form is the beating heart that vivifies all her compositions. And the artist's very deliberate, somewhat counterintuitive placement of her focal entanglements slightly, or at times dramatically, off to one side of the picture's central vertical axis serves to emphasize the existence, and

potential infinitude, of the atmospheric ground into which these spectral whorls are skillfully woven.

Much was made in the press release of the artist's familial immersion in scientific and cosmological theory, the inference being that the paintings embody or encrypt such lore for the viewer to experience or decode, as though proffering enlightenment through the conveyance of legends or keys to universal truths. Claims as to the paintings' abilities to transmit sacred qualities or to function as conduits to metaphysical realms get piled onto the aura-enhancing heap, too, as do assertions that the profoundly feminine character of the works might channel—nay, rectify and reawaken—the eternal spirit of creativity. To wit, this zinger: “[These paintings] may therefore be construed as reformulations of Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde* for a post-quantum, multiphasic, and intersectional age.” In casting the artist as mystic or seer, long-discredited roles given credence in recent times by the understandably rapturous embrace of artists such as Forrest Bess and Hilma af Klint, these mythologizing encomiums strike me as a stretch. The works certainly make reference to, and thereby reasonably endorse, the questing for totalizing accounts and suppositional speculations, but they're aesthetic statements, not theological or scientific theses. And besides, Myers's oeuvre comports just as comfortably with a variety of pop-cultural pictorial genres such as sci-fi book covers and prog-rock album sleeves as it does with the trajectory of so-called spiritual art. While for some this show may have provided a path to the Absolute, for me it led, happily, to the crystal-purveying head shop, where one might partake of a little transcendental medication and groove to the work's simultaneously uplifting and tranquilizing beauty.

— Jeff Gibson